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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRAGUE 001224

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EUR/NCE FOR ATRATENSEK, EUR/ERA FOR NOTALLAH, WHA/CCA,
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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [CU](#) [UNGA](#) [EZ](#) [EUN](#)
SUBJECT: CZECH INSIGHTS INTO EU POLICY ON CUBA

REF: A. STATE 147620
[1](#)B. BRUSSELS 3269
[1](#)C. LISBON 2764

Classified By: POLEC Counselor Michael Dodman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Embassy Officials met with Czech MFA Officials in the office of Human Rights and Transition Policy as well as the office of the Americas to discuss working together for real change in Cuba. The Czechs noted that our proposals (reftel A) were disseminated by the Portuguese EU Presidency to all member states, and discussed at the November EU COLAT meeting. Czech officials stated that while they expressed support for our four proposals during the discussion, the general sentiment at the COLAT was against strengthening U.S.-EU cooperation on Cuba at this time.

COLAT - No Consensus on Cuba Proposals

[1](#)2. (C) According to the Czechs, Cuba was discussed at the November EU Working Party on Latin America (COLAT) under "any other business." (Note: This is a downgrade from what USEU was told on October 31. End Note.) Our counterparts indicated that the general sentiment at the discussion was that the EU should continue to pursue dialogue with Cuba and avoid linking itself too closely to the U.S. in this area, since they fear any closer U.S.-EU cooperation could harm their efforts to strengthen dialogue with Cuba. More specifically on our proposals, there was widespread interest in only the fourth proposal (a General Assembly Resolution on Human Rights Day), but not unanimity. On proposals two and three (reporting by Rapporteurs and events related to freedom for political prisoners), however, there appears to be entrenched opposition from "three or four countries," according to the Czechs, who referenced Spain, Italy, France and Belgium. While no action was taken, these proposals will be discussed by the EU again, but this time at the EU Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM), which meets on November 28-29.

EU Pursuing Dialogue with Cuba

[1](#)3. (C) The Czechs reminded us that at the June GAERC (the meeting of EU Foreign Ministers), the EU issued an invitation for Cuban authorities to visit Brussels. The Cuban government apparently expressed an interest in dialogue, but set three conditions: 1) Abolition of the June EU measures, 2) that the EU refrain from U.S.-EU action and 3) that the EU revise its EU common position held since 1996. According to the Czechs, while the EU is not planning to accept these conditions, the majority of EU member states are in favor of abolishing the June measures since the majority believes the measures have not produced results. No plans or dates have

been set for such a visit, but it remains an open invitation.

The Czechs opined that it is unlikely the EU would revise its common position, unless Cuba took substantive action to address human rights concerns.

Cubans Rebuff EU Presidency Demarche on Political Prisoners

¶4. (C) In response to Embassy officials' queries about the first proposal (internal political dialogue with the UN on the release of political prisoners), the Czechs commented that the Portuguese EU Presidency recently demarched the Cubans on the release of eight or nine of the political prisoners with the most grave medical conditions. According to the Czechs, the French were the driving force behind the delivery of this particular demarche. The Cuban Foreign Ministry official however, refused to even receive the list of names from Portuguese diplomats in Havana.

¶5. (C) Comment: The Czechs, who are genuinely committed to support change in Cuba and commit a fair portion of their limited "democratic transition" resources to activities in Cuba, have worked within EU channels to garner support for our four proposals. At this time, however, the Czechs do not hold out much hope for EU consensus on any of the U.S. proposals, with the slim possible exception of our proposal for a general UNGA resolution on Human Rights Day. Based on Post's multiple MFA meetings on this subject, the Czechs appear rather disheartened that they have been unable to sway the EU to take a stronger line, and while not stated, they appear to be taking a wait-and-see approach now on the EU pursuit of dialogue with Cuba to see if it produces any results. Embassy Prague has made it clear to the Czech MFA that we welcome all opportunities, including on a bilateral

PRAGUE 00001224 002 OF 002

basis, to expand our existing collaboration on Cuba.
Grabner